



Études photographiques

32 | Printemps 2015

Interroger le genre / Retour sur l'amateur /
Personnages de l'histoire

Eugène Durieu, senior civil servant, photographer and forger

Sylvie Aubenas

Translator: Caroline Bouché



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesphotographiques/3534>

ISSN: 1777-5302

Publisher

Société française de photographie

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 January 2015

ISBN: 9782911961328

ISSN: 1270-9050

Electronic reference

Sylvie Aubenas, « Eugène Durieu, senior civil servant, photographer and forger », *Études photographiques* [Online], 32 | Printemps 2015, Online since 16 July 2015, connection on 04 May 2019.
URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesphotographiques/3534>

This text was automatically generated on 4 May 2019.

Propriété intellectuelle

Eugène Durieu, senior civil servant, photographer and forger

Sylvie Aubenas

Translation : Caroline Bouché

- 1 Eugène Durieu (1800-1874) is best known to art historians for his collaboration with Eugène Delacroix, who commissioned him to produce under his direction a series of photographs of nude models. Although two exhibitions (at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in 1998 and the Musée Delacroix in 2008), together with a special issue of the *Revue de l'art*¹ on Delacroix, prompted me to study Delacroix and his complex relationship with photography, Durieu remained a shadowy figure. At the instigation and with the encouragement of Jean-Michel Leniaud, Director of the École Nationale des Chartes, however, I devoted a lecture to Durieu himself on 1 April 2014, which I delivered a second time at the Musée Delacroix on 16 October 2014. The present article resumes and summarizes this study.
- 2 Retracing Durieu's life presents an interesting methodological challenge: in the context of exhibitions, books or articles, I have often found myself piecing together the biographies of nineteenth-century photographers. Photography was frequently not their main occupation, and had to fit in with a multifarious array of professions and financial situations.² Nineteenth-century France was certainly a breeding-ground for the most eclectic, not to say fantastical, lives and experiences, reflecting a society in the throes of change and alternating political regimes. Durieu is undeniably a case in point in this respect. It is difficult to draw up a linear summary of his life: the facts are hard to come by and in view of his numerous occupations, often disjointed. The present study therefore emphasizes its less familiar aspects rather than his links with Delacroix, which have already been thoroughly researched. As new elements have already come to light between the two lectures,³ however, there seems little doubt that still more additions will be made to this initial biographical draft over time.



Fig. 1. Presumed portrait of E. Durieu, detail of a plate from the Durieu album, salted paper print, 9 x 6.8 cm, ca 1855, George Eastman House coll., Rochester.

- 3 Jean Louis Marie Eugène Durieu was born in Nîmes on 10 December 1800 to Jean-Michel Durieu and Marie-Henriette Belle.⁴ His father was a legal advisor, whose career ranged from tax collector to Deputy Head at the Ministry of Finance, and led him to specialize in written works on the technical aspects of tax. In 1822 he published what is regarded as his 'great work', a legal and administrative tax accounting manual entitled *Manuel des percepteurs et des receveurs municipaux des communes, contenant... le texte ou l'analyse des lois, ordonnances, instructions et décisions relatives à la gestion de ces comptables*,⁵ which was updated in several later editions. In 1824, Jean-Michel Durieu involved his son in the launch of a new monthly periodical, *Le Mémorial des percepteurs et des receveurs des communes*, a publication that despite changing its name over the centuries continued to appear until 2010, in other words for nearly two hundred years. Eugène Durieu went on to specialize in the same area as his father, a fact borne out by his voluminous bibliography, and in turn called upon his own son to collaborate with him on his publications. Durieu's career as summarized in the dictionary of Gustave Vapereau is inextricably linked to his literary output:

"Prior to 1840, he was appointed to the Administrative Division of Communes, at the Ministry of the Interior, and stood – unsuccessfully – as opposition candidate for one of the electoral colleges in Paris. Some time later, the Chamber closed the Division as part of an economy drive, and in compensation awarded its director, Monsieur Durieu, the title of Inspector General of Hospices (1847)."⁶

- 4 On 10 October 1827 he married Luce Estelle Muriel, the daughter of François Auguste Michel Muriel, Director at the War Depot and Chevalier of the Order of Saint-Louis and the Légion d'Honneur, and Jeanne Baltié.⁷ In 1824, a certain Estelle Muriel, in all probability the same person, had three landscape studies published by the renowned romantic lithograph printer Motte, father-in-law of Achille Devéria. They had only one

child, a son, Henri Auguste Durieu, who was born in 1829. Although he proved to be a conscientious young civil servant and made a good marriage, he found himself with plenty of time on his hands once he had completed his official tasks and helped his father compile his austere tomes, and this led him to develop a passion for the arts and artists, with a particular lifelong fondness for the theater and stage actresses.

- 5 Durieu's literary and poetic pursuits were at their height in the late 1820s and early 1830s. He submitted texts to the magazine *La Psyché, choix de pièces en vers et en prose dédiées aux dames*, [Psyche, a Selection of Pieces in Verse and Prose Dedicated to Ladies], which were published in June and August 1826 and again in March, April and June 1829. In 1832, he provided Alexandre Dumas with the subject for the *Mari de la veuve* [The Widow's Husband], a one-act comedy, commissioned by Mlle Dupont for a charity performance on 4 April 1832. Dumas gave a vivacious account of this episode in his *Mémoires*.⁸

"I had a friend, a man of infinite wit, who was Head or Deputy Head of one of the divisions within the Ministry of the Interior; – indeed this person has since made a name for himself in the Civil Service. He was called, and is fortunately still called, Eugène Durieu.

I had met him two or three times that year, and on each occasion he had suggested some subject for a play, sometimes in one act, sometimes in two or even three. For some inexplicable reason, however, we had never taken things any further.

I wrote to him and he arrived immediately.

'Let us run through your choice of subjects', I said to him. 'I require a one-act play for a charity performance to be given by Mademoiselle Dupont.

'Are you out of your mind? It is billed to take place next Tuesday!'

'It has been postponed for a week.'

'And you truly believe that in that time the play can be written, run through, cast, learned and performed?'

'Leave it to me.'

'Very well!'

'One day to write the play, one day to recopy it, one day to run through it; that still leaves seven days for rehearsals, a more than generous allowance!'

Eugène Durieu, once he had acknowledged the truth of these calculations, put his cards on the table.

We decided upon *The Widow's Husband* but the arrangements still left a lot to be desired.

'Listen,' I said to Durieu, 'it is now midday and I shall be busy until 5 p.m. But for reasons I cannot fathom—a whim, no doubt—Anicet Bourgeois is anxious to enter the portals of the Théâtre-Français. Seek him out on my behalf and then work something out together for the script; come back here at 4.30 and we shall dine. In the course of the evening, we shall number the scenes; I will turn my attention to the play tonight or tomorrow morning; but in any case, whatever time I begin, it will be entirely finished twenty-four hours later.'

Durieu rushed off. I came home at 5, as arranged, to find my two associates hard at work. The groundwork still needed to be done, however: I came to the rescue.

They left me at midnight, having numbered almost all the scenes.

The following day, as promised, I got to work. [etc.]"

- 6 Although Dumas no doubt embroidered the truth, this episode provides a precious clue to a facet of Durieu's personality.



FIG. 2. E. DURIU, "NUDE COUPLE: FEMALE NUDE STANDING IN THE BACKGROUND, MALE NUDE SITTING IN PROFILE ON A LEOPARD SKIN", PLATE 3 OF AN ALBUM CONTAINING 32 STUDIES OF MODELS, SALTED PAPER PRINT, 16.2 X 11.5 CM, 1854, BNF COLL., PARIS.

- 7 In 1838, Durieu was Head of the Administrative Division of Communes and Hospices at the Ministry of the Interior.⁹ Jean-Baptiste Pierret, a former classmate of Delacroix, who remained one of his closest friends until his death in 1854, spent his entire professional life at the Ministry of the Interior and found himself in 1839 in the same bureau as Durieu.¹⁰ This was probably the first link in the chain that led Durieu to Delacroix, even before he was appointed Director General of Cults. In 1842, Durieu was Head of the Charities Division at the Ministry of the Interior, before becoming Head of the Third Division for Departments and Communes. In 1844, he rose through the ranks, from Head of Accounts for the Communes to Head of the Administrative Division of Communes and Hospices. The 1848 revolution opened up new career possibilities, however, which give us a clue as to his political leanings: on 29 February 1848, Hippolyte Carnot,¹¹ the Minister for State Education and Cults, named him Director General for the Administrative Department of Cults, a highly auspicious promotion. In March, he was also made a member of the High Commission for Scientific and Literary Studies. He continued to perform his duties as Director of Cults until his dismissal on 25 April 1850. In the course of his two-year appointment, Durieu carried out impressive, groundbreaking reforms.¹² This period, which brought him into contact with Prosper Mérimée,¹³ Eugène Viollet-le-Duc and Henri Courmont, represented the pinnacle of his career. The reason for his dismissal in April 1850 has never been elucidated: "By presidential decree, on this day of 25 April, Monsieur de Contencin, Prefect of the Yonne, has been appointed to succeed Monsieur E. Durieu as Director of the Division of Religions."¹⁴ Durieu was now entitled to retire. The news seems to have come as a surprise even to him, however, according to the opening lines of this thank-you letter to one of his colleagues: "You will have learned from *Le Moniteur*, as I have, that the Division of Cults has been placed in other hands..."¹⁵

During Durieu's trial, the public prosecutor for the Imperial Court of Paris, enquiring into the reasons for this dismissal with a view to "obtaining incontrovertible evidence of the moral character of the accused," was told that no information had been found to justify "the motives that led one of my predecessors to instigate the replacement of Monsieur Durieu."¹⁶

- 8 It was following his dismissal from the Civil Service that Durieu, who now had plenty of free time, really focused his attention on photography. But what sparked his initial interest? It seems quite possible that he experimented with the daguerreotype as early as 1842. This theory is borne out by the fact that among the prints registered for copyright by his son in 1860, which included reproductions of his father's works, featured two inside views of the Tuileries dated 13 July 1842, the day of the Duke of Orleans's tragic accident. Could Durieu, who was a civil servant at the Ministry of the Interior at the time and also an amateur photographer, have been allowed inside the Tuileries that same day to take pictures of the Duke's apartments for posterity? This hypothesis needs to be consolidated. The first explicit reference to his photographs is contained in a letter from Mérimée to Viollet-le-Duc dated 29 July 1848: "I was hoping to see you at the exhibition held by Monsieur Durieu [sic], who was showing his curious daguerreotypes."¹⁷ By July 1848, the Commission for Arts and Religious Buildings created on 7 March 1848 and chaired by Durieu was already considering the use of daguerreotypes to record the state of churches that were in need of restoration. This was the precise context that led to Durieu's exhibition of photographic plates.¹⁸ He reappears some time later as one of the instigators of the 1851 Mission Héliographique, led by Léon de Laborde and Henri Courmont, whose photographic oeuvre had just been rediscovered.¹⁹ It was in his official capacity as Director of Cults that he was introduced, or reintroduced, to Delacroix. In November 1849, he asked him to join the Commission for Arts and Religious Buildings. On 26 February 1850, Durieu asked him for his opinion on applying the Haro restoration technique to the ancient frescoes of the church of Saint-Eustache, which had been discovered in 1849. Their exchange continued, as can be seen in this letter sent in 1852 by Léon Riesener to Rivet: "Monsieur Durieu has just made an excellent daguerreotype on paper of him [Delacroix]. You should put your name down for a print."²⁰



Fig. 3. E. DURIEU, "NUDE", SALTED PAPER PRINT, 12.5 x 16.5 CM AND "REPRODUCTION OF AN ENGRAVING BY DÜRER", VARNISHED SALTED PAPER PRINT, 9.5 x 6.5 CM, PLATE FROM THE DURIEU ALBUM, CA 1855, GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE COLL., ROCHESTER.

- 9 In the early 1850s, Durieu, like many of his photographic peers, gravitated from the daguerreotype to the calotype. None of the works from his daguerreotypical oeuvre can be attributed to him with any certainty. Apart from the Delacroix album held at the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, another work on paper does exist, however, a more personal album preserved at the George Eastman House in Rochester, which was once part of the Gabriel Cromer collection. Its repertoire is more varied and includes female nudes in fairly elaborate settings, as well as portraits and reproductions of paintings and engravings. It also contains the only portrait of Durieu to have been identified to date. A number of prints have also been preserved by the Société Française de Photographie (SFP) and are similar in tone to the Rochester album. They feature an astonishing number of actresses posing in stage costumes. Although he saved his most vibrant passages for the prints of Nègre and Le Secq, Ernest Lacan penned an amiable report of his participation at the 1856 Brussels Exhibition:

“Monsieur Durieu’s studies are remarkably tasteful. I was particularly struck by the profile of a woman bearing a most pleasant expression, as well as a graceful model and astutely composed *Ophelia*. The portraits of Eugène Delacroix, Paul Huet and Barons de Witte and Regnault are entirely satisfactory.”²¹

- 10 In 1857, Durieu showed his “portraits and studies from nature” at the SFP. These were taken from negatives on paper and glass and from the daguerreotype studies he had made from nature.
- 11 In 1851, along with Delacroix, Durieu became one of the founder members of the Société Héliographique, the first French institution to be created specifically for photographers. Above all, its brief was to encourage the development of photography on paper and in particular the calotype as opposed to the daguerreotype.²²
- 12 It was at precisely this time in the early 1850s that Delacroix’s interest in photography was at its height, coinciding with that of Durieu. In February 1850, he wrote in his journal: “ask Boissard for some daguerreotypes on paper,”²³ and later, in September 1850: “Laurens tells me that Ziegler is producing a sizeable number of daguerreotypes, including portrayals of nude men. I intend to go and see him to ask if he can lend me a few.” In May 1853, he showed Pierret and his cousin Léon Riesener the prints given to him by Durieu. In November 1853, he discussed the topic of photography with Riesener, who in the 1840s had not only been a painter but an ‘author’ of daguerreotypes. Delacroix maintained that the term author was a misnomer for what he regarded as a mechanical recording process, a machine-led art: “He referred to the solemn account the good Durieu and his friend, who assists him in these operations, give of their time and trouble, whilst taking much of the credit for the success of the aforementioned operations, or more precisely their results.” He made fun of Riesener, who had asked them with great trepidation if he could use their pictures as models for his paintings without being accused of plagiarism. Finally, on two successive Sundays, 18 and 25 June 1854, he visited Durieu on the seventh floor of his home at 40 rue de Bourgogne to ask him to make a series of photographs of models under his guidance:
- “18 June at Durieu’s from 8 o’clock until nearly 5, during which time we did nothing but pose [...] Huet took me there: I realized I had forgotten my glasses and had to run back, exhausted, all the way up to the seventh floor.”



FIG. 4. E. DURIEU, "MODEL OF MALE NUDE SITTING IN PROFILE ON A LEOPARD SKIN", PLATE 11 OF AN ALBUM CONTAINING 32 STUDIES OF MODELS, SALTED PAPER PRINT, 17 X 13.5 CM, 1854, BNF COLL., PARIS.

- 13 Another indication of Durieu's collaboration with Delacroix is the possible presence of Paul Huet at the sitting on 18 June. One can certainly make this assumption from the entry in Delacroix's *Journal*. A passage from Huet's biography which Claude Schopp kindly brought to my attention corroborates this interpretation:

"A daguerreotype exists, taken at Durieu's during the period when he and Delacroix were still visiting him, in the early stages of the invention and their budding enthusiasm, which depicts him [he is referring here to Huet] posing as Christ during The Flagellation; the chest and arms are superb and his head, gazing up to Heaven, bears a wonderful expression; he was 43 or 44 at the time."²⁴
- 14 This anecdote corresponds perfectly to Delacroix's journal if one merely ages Huet by a few years. Huet died in 1869 but his biography was only published in 1911, which makes a slip in the date quite plausible. Huet was not only one of the artists portrayed by Durieu but a longstanding friend of Delacroix.
- 15 It was just as Durieu was taking these photographs for Delacroix that the Société Française de Photographie replaced the Société Héliographique. Although a first meeting did take place in August 1854, it was only officially launched in November. Durieu drew up the statutes and acted as its President until 1857.²⁵ In 1855 he was asked to write an account of the first exhibition to be held at the SFP.²⁶
- 16 He left the SFP in late 1857, when legal proceedings were first taken out against him. From that point on, everything seems to have been done to wipe him from the slate. His departure raised no comment in the Society's *Bulletin* and no obituary was published on his death in 1874. His last contact with the SFP was in the form of a letter sent in 1865. It shows quite clearly that he was no longer a regular visitor:

“Paris, 21 April 1865

Dear Sir,

Until 1857 and throughout the first eleven months of 1858 (including November), you were kind enough to provide me with copies of the BSFP [*Bulletin de la Société Française de Photographie*]. This practice only ceased with the December 1858 delivery.

I recognize that this is my fault, as I was in the habit of having them collected from the offices of the Société, where you would most thoughtfully leave them at my disposal. I was remiss in sending for them. It must however be stressed that I have never stopped studying, if not actually practising, the art of photography, and have always followed its developments with the greatest interest. As I am sure you will appreciate, I am therefore extremely attached to the *Bulletin*, which I have accompanied since its inception and which brings back so many fond memories.

Would it be remotely possible for you to provide me with the back issues I require to complete my collection? [...]

I would like to take this opportunity of expressing my heartfelt gratitude to you personally, in the hope that you will be able to intervene in this matter.

As soon as I receive what I hope will be a favorable reply, I will send someone to collect the issues.

I trust you have received the 1855 volume I had the good fortune to send you, together with a few duplicates I had in my possession. I felt they might be of some use to you.

In memory of past times,

Yours sincerely,

E. Durieu

170 rue de Rivoli.”²⁷

- 17 It is difficult to determine the exact state of Durieu’s finances before the disastrous events of 1857. In March 1842, he and his wife bought a substantial 487 m² property, including a large house with outbuildings, on the corner of 48 rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs and 71 boulevard du Montparnasse, for 36 000 Francs.²⁸ In April 1851, he sold the property for the sum of 50 000 Francs to Alfred Ernouf de Verclives, who was living at the time at 47, rue de la Ferme-des-Mathurins.²⁹ In March 1847, before a lawyer named Ducloux, he founded the *Mémorial des percepteurs* [Memorial of Tax Collectors], a limited partnership company in the name of Durieu et Cie.³⁰



Fig. 5. E. DURIEU, "STUDY OF WOMAN IN COSTUME", SALTED PAPER PRINT, 13.6 x 12.7 CM, 1857, SFP COLL., PARIS.

- ¹⁸ On 11 and 12 June 1857, Durieu purchased a concession for a 500 hectare coalmine known as the concession of Champleix (Cantal) for the sum of 210 000 Francs, including all equipment and outbuildings, from a general partnership company called Bonne et Cie.³¹ A royal charter dated 20 May 1842 had originally given the concession to the company Rabusson-Lamothe et Ferrière-Lafitte. On 17 March 1857, the company sold Champleix mine for 100 000 Francs to another general partnership company, Bonne et Cie, run by Messrs Bonne, Loubet, Gaffard and Lentz. A few months later, Bonne et Cie sold the mine to Durieu for 210 000 Francs, on the understanding that 100 000 Francs would go directly to Rabusson-Lamothe et Ferrière-Lafitte. Durieu rapidly found himself facing bankruptcy, however, and failed to honor the agreement. In December 1857, Bonne instituted proceedings to annul the sale, through the Crown Court of the Seine, although these were later abandoned.
- ¹⁹ The mine had never actually been exploited by Rabusson-Lamothe et Ferrière-Lafitte during their ownership (1842-1857).³² So what exactly was Durieu's role in all this? Was he an intermediary, a partner or simply a front? As we await the results of further research into the circumstances of this peculiar trial, two hypotheses may be formulated. It is unlikely that Durieu was just credulous or naïve; a more probable scenario is that he got embroiled in a financial arrangement that went wrong. But how did he get into such a risky situation in the first place? Was he simply lured by financial gain or did he have an urgent need of a large amount of ready cash, as Jean-Michel Leniaud suggests in his biographical notice:

"If the note written by Rouland to the public prosecutor of the Court of Paris is to be believed, it was a mistress who was behind Durieu's financial ruin, and this no doubt explains why he got involved in such dubious commercial affairs: 'Monsieur

Durieu has not only brought his family into disrepute, his behavior has left his wife totally destitute.”³³

20 Another clue seems to corroborate Durieu’s questionable sense of morality, although it has nothing to do with the trial. A note in Léon Bloy’s journal reveals not only that Mme Carnot was Durieu’s mistress for many years but that Hippolyte Carnot was Mme Durieu’s lover – a *ménage à quatre* in which all the protagonists appear to have got on famously.³⁴

21 The first trial took place in December 1858 and Durieu was convicted *in absentia* to twenty years hard labor. According to the leading newspapers, at the second hearing in August 1860, he asked to be judged in the presence of all the parties. *L’Illustration* rubbed salt in the wound by highlighting the contrast between the respectability of the man in the dock and the accusations brought against him:

“Early last week a man of the world, Monsieur Eugène Durieu, a writer to whom the Théâtre-Français owes a witty comedy which starred Mademoiselle Mars, but also a high-ranking civil servant, a former Director in the Ministry of Cults and an Officer of the Légion d’Honneur, appeared before the Crown Court of the Seine. Having been found guilty of circulating sixty promissory notes with a value of 277 000 Francs, upon which he had forged the signature of Baron Ernouf, one of his friends, in 1858 Monsieur Eugène Durieu was convicted *in absentia* to twenty years hard labor. He asked to be judged in the presence of all the parties. Extenuating circumstances were granted by the jury and the Court sentenced him to four years imprisonment.”³⁵

22 *La Presse littéraire* opted for a more technical and precise account: “The Crown Court of the Seine, under the presidency of Monsieur Brault, recently devoted three hearings to an affair concerning Monsieur Eugène Durieu, former Director of Cults within the Ministry of the Interior, who on 9 December 1858 received *in absentia* a sentence of twenty years hard labor. The prosecution accused Eugène Durieu of having circulated sixty promissory notes bearing the forged signature of Baron Ernouf. These forgeries were of two kinds: forty-four promissory notes constituted civil commitments and were therefore considered as forgeries of a private nature, and sixteen other notes, in the form of orders and bills of exchange, were regarded as forgeries of an exclusively commercial nature. Prosecuting Counsel Barbier upheld the charge. Maître Sénard defended the interests of Baron Ernouf, who had filed a civil action. Maître Crémieux pleaded on behalf of Eugène Durieu. After a three-quarter hour deliberation, the jury found the accused guilty on all counts. It was however prepared to give him the benefit of extenuating circumstances. The Court then sentenced Eugène Durieu to four years in prison. Durieu was also ordered to pay 100 000 Francs to the civil claimant.”³⁶

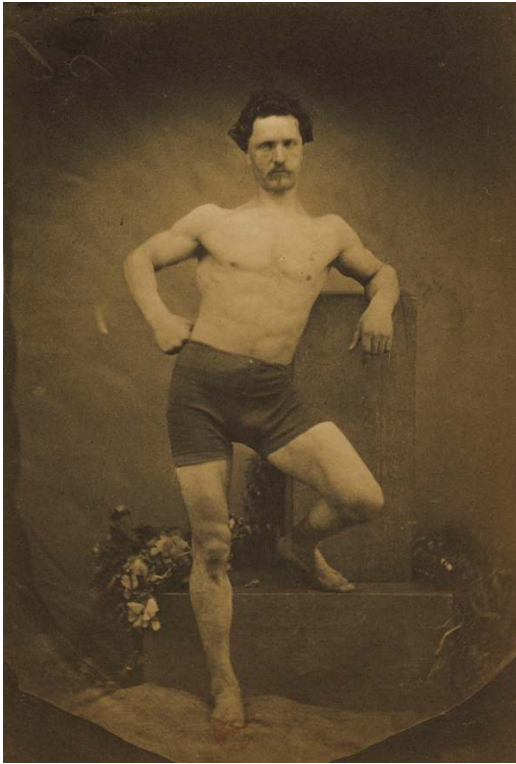


Fig. 6. E. DURIEU, "MODEL OF MALE NUDE STANDING (IN UNDERSHORTS)", PLATE 27 OF AN ALBUM CONTAINING 32 STUDIES OF MODELS, SALTED PAPER PRINT, 17.2 X 11.6 CM, 1854, BNF COLL., PARIS.

- 23 This was the same Baron Ernouf de Verclives (1817-1889)³⁷ as the one who had bought Durieu's house in 1851, and it seems likely that he also intended to participate in the purchase of the Champleix mines. If he pulled out at the last minute, these forgeries may well have been a way of escaping a desperate situation by forcing his hand and could explain the extenuating circumstances recognized by the judge and jury at the end of the second trial.
- 24 Durieu's biography peters out with his imprisonment. The only clues to his later years stem from his son, whose life bore a striking resemblance to his father's.
- 25 Henri Auguste Durieu, aka Auguste Muriel,³⁸ was born on 6 June 1829. He started his career in the theater as an author and journalist and produced two plays in 1854, *Les Écumeurs de mer* and *Pendu ou marié!*³⁹ This was followed by another work the following year, *Le Théâtre aujourd'hui: l'auteur, le directeur, le critique, l'acteur, l'actrice, le public*.⁴⁰ He was also the editor of theater magazines such as *La Presse théâtrale, revue artistique et théâtrale*⁴¹ and *Le Bulletin dramatique*, which appeared in 1856. "[...] editor Auguste Muriel, once the *éminence grise* behind *La Presse théâtrale*, a charming young man by all accounts, with every prerequisite for success, has since discovered the Stock Exchange, where he has made his fortune. I have never managed to get hold of a copy of *Le Bulletin dramatique*."⁴²
- 26 In 1856, he was also working for the Légion d'Honneur. In January 1858 he married Jeannette Brisac and appears on the marriage contract as someone "of independent means".⁴³ In June 1860, however, his assets were separated from those of his wife. In the official report, he was referred to as a former banker, who was now bankrupt and serving a sentence in Mazas prison.⁴⁴ Were his bankruptcy and imprisonment linked to the difficulties facing his father during the same period? By the 1860s all this was behind him,

however, and he can be found directing a company called *La photographie des trois empereurs* at 170 rue de Rivoli.

"*La photographie des trois empereurs*, run by Monsieur Auguste Muriel, a former colleague from the theatrical press, is currently undergoing refurbishment on account of its new extension. Located opposite the offices of the Ministry of State and the abode of the Emperor, overlooking the square of the Palais-Royal and the new façade of the Comédie-Française, *La photographie des trois empereurs* is undoubtedly situated at the most brilliant apex of the capital, Monsieur Muriel's education and relations are of a kind to attract people to his establishment and his astute business sense is quite unparalleled. Thanks to the spontaneous support of his former comrades at Sainte-Barbe Collège, the artist was able to find the initial impetus for his photography, which is now deemed worthy of the attention of true aficionados."⁴⁵

- 27 The business specialized in portraits of actors. In 1865, it submitted these portraits, alongside dogs photographed from life, other actors from the Comédie-Française and a selection of views of Spain, to the Société Française de Photographie. In 1865, when working as editor of *La critique illustrée*, Auguste Muriel published a photograph entitled *La Plaza de toros*, which had been taken in Spain in 1864. Édouard Manet's 1865/1866 painting, *Combat de taureaux* [Bullfight], was based on this picture.



FIG. 7. E. DURIEU, "PORTRAIT AND STUDY OF WOMEN", SIX PRINTS ON SALTED PAPER PASTED ONTO A SINGLE SHEET OF CARDBOARD, 57.7 X 47.4 CM, 1855, SFP COLL., PARIS.

- 28 In the end Auguste Muriel did however revert to a more administrative position: Secretary of the Permanent Commission on Customs Value at the Ministry of Agriculture and Trade. He then followed in his father's and grandfather's footsteps by acting as editor on the *Journal des percepteurs* [Journal of Tax Collectors]. In 1876 he completed the new edition of *Poursuites en matière de contributions directes [...]*, first published by Eugène Durieu in 1838 as a guide for Prefects and a reference for their decrees: "The almost complete work compiled by Monsieur Durieu with the help of his son, whom he had been

initiating for many years in this domain, has had to be finished by the latter alone, Monsieur Durieu having died just as he was putting the final touches to the volume.” This short snippet announcing the publication of an austere work is the very last piece of information we have found relating to Eugène Durieu’s final years.

- 29 Eugène Durieu died in Geneva on 16 May 1874, at 4 boulevard Helvétique,⁴⁶ and August Muriel on 21 February 1877, at 6 rue Oudinot in Paris.

NOTES

1. “Un album de photographies d’Eugène Delacroix”, in exh. cat. *Delacroix, le trait romantique*, (Paris: BnF, 1998), pp. 51-55. “Les photographies d’Eugène Delacroix”, *Revue de l’art*, 127, 2000, pp. 62-69. “Les albums de nus d’Eugène Delacroix”, in exh. cat. *Delacroix et la photographie*, (Paris: Musée du Louvre éditions / Le Passage, 2008), pp. 23-51.
2. On this subject, see the “Dictionnaire des calotypistes en France”, compiled in collaboration with Paul-Louis Roubert to coincide with the exhibition “Le calotype en France, 1843-1860”, in exh. cat. *Primitifs de la photographie. Le calotype en France, 1843-1860*, (Paris: BnF / Gallimard, 2010), pp. 258-314.
3. I am particularly grateful to Claude Schopp and Marc Durand for their decisive contribution in researching or bringing to my attention previously undiscovered sources and archives. Without their assistance, it would have been impossible to piece together so many biographical elements on Durieu and his family.
4. According to the fragmentary records in Nîmes’ city archives, Jean-Michel Durieu married Marie-Henriette Belle on 26 March 1793 in the 4th arrondissement of Paris.
On Durieu’s marriage certificate dated October 1827, his father’s age appears as 56, which would mean he was born in 1771. In 1827, Durieu’s parents were living in Paris on the rue Saint-André-des-Arts.
5. For a detailed bibliography of the two Durieus, see the entries in the general catalogue of the BnF. Eugène Durieu was associated with his father’s work on the *Manuel des percepteurs municipaux* as early as 1822.
6. Gustave VAPEREAU, *Dictionnaire universel des contemporains*, 2nd ed., (Paris: Hachette, 1861).
7. I am grateful to Claude Schopp for having researched and discovered this marriage certificate in the Paris archives.
8. Alexandre DUMAS, *Mes Mémoires*, Claude Schopp (ed.), (Paris: Robert Laffont, “Bouquins” coll., 1989), vol. 2, p. 715.
9. He went on to publish the *Code des établissements publics, Poursuites en matière de contributions directes* (1838). According to the contemporary reviews, “this work [is] aimed at jurisconsults”.
10. On Perret’s biography, see Michèle HANNOOSH’s new and complete edition of Delacroix’s *Journal*, (Paris: José Corti, 2009), vol. 2, p. 2299.
11. See note 34 and Léon Bloy’s account of the relationship between Durieu and Carnot.
12. For more on this subject, see Jean-Michel LENIAUD in *Les Cathédrales au XIX^e siècle*, (Paris: Economica / Caisse nationale des monuments historiques et des sites, 1993), p. 86 and ff. Leniaud strongly emphasizes the decisive influence of Durieu and his remarkable managerial qualities.

13. See Mérimée's letter to Joly Leterme dated 26 July 1848: "The Director General of Religions appears to be a gallant gentleman. He listens and is determined to make a success of his administration", in *Correspondance générale*, Maurice Parturier (ed.), (Paris: Le Divan, 1946), vol. 5, pp. 365-366.
14. *Annales archéologiques*, 1850, vol. 10, p. 108.
15. Quoted by J.-M. LENIAUD, *Les Cathédrales au XIX^e siècle*, op. cit., pp. 87-88.
16. Archives nationales (AN), F19/1864 ministère des Cultes.
17. J.-M. LENIAUD, *Les Cathédrales au XIX^e siècle*, op. cit., p. 369.
18. See Anne DE MONDENARD, *La Mission héliographique, cinq photographes parcourent la France en 1851*, (Paris: Monum, 2002), pp. 25-26 and 223.
19. Hans P. KRAUS, Denis CANGUILHEM, *Henri Courmont: Salt Prints from Paper Negatives, 1853-1855*, (New York: Hans P. Krauss, 2010).
20. A print at the Musée d'Orsay, reproductions from the Moreau Nélaton collection at the BnF and other reproductions of this portrait by Durieu's son Auguste Muriel also exist.
21. Ernest LACAN, "Exposition photographique de Bruxelles", *La Lumière*, 44, Saturday 1 November 1856.
22. See note 2.
23. See Michèle HANNOOSH's new and complete edition of Delacroix' *Journal*, op. cit., pp. 483 and 2118, and S. AUBENAS, P.-L. ROUBERT, "Dictionnaire des calotypistes en France", in *Primitifs de la photographie. Le calotype en France, 1843-1860*, op. cit.
24. Paul Huet (1803-1869) d'après ses notes, sa correspondance [...] par son fils René Paul Huet, (Paris: Renouard, 1911), p. 47.
25. See André GUNTHER, "L'institution du photographique. Le roman de la Société héliographique", *Études photographiques*, 12, November 2002, pp. 37-63, and A. GUNTHER, "Naissance de la Société française de photographie", in *L'Utopie photographique. Regards sur les collections de la Société française de photographie*, (Cherbourg: Le Point du Jour, 2004), pp. 15-24.
26. *Rapport présenté par M. E. Durieu, au nom de la commission chargée de l'examen de l'exposition ouverte dans les salons de la Société française de photographie, du 1^{er} août au 15 novembre 1855*, (Paris: Mallet-Bachelier, 1855).
27. SFP archives. The address he gives is that of his son's photography business.
28. AN, Minutier central, LXVIII/953.
29. AN, Minutier central, LXVIII/1009.
30. Dissolved on 25 March 1858 by notary Monsieur Masson-Jolly.
31. AN, Minutier central, XLVIII/852.
32. *Gazette de l'industrie et du commerce*, 144, 6 December 1857, p. 7.
33. J.-M. LENIAUD, *Les Cathédrales au XIX^e siècle*, op. cit. AN F19 1864.
34. Léon Bloy's *Journal*, p. 39.
35. *L'Illustration*, vol. 36, 1860, p. 78.
36. *La presse littéraire*, 15, 5 August 1860, p. 240. See also *La Presse*, 26 July 1860.
37. Doctor of Law, attorney at the Royal Court of Paris, French historian and writer. Son of Gaspard Augustin Ernouf, he was the grandson of General Jean Augustin Ernouf and son-in-law of Baron Louis Pierre Édouard Bignon, having married his daughter Adrienne Caroline Bignon at Mesnil-Verclives on 6 March 1842. The last two volumes of his father-in-law Louis Pierre Édouard Bignon's *Histoire de France* can be partially attributed to him.
38. AN XCIII, 779, affidavit following the death of Monsieur Durieu: "The declarants have furthermore declared and testified that Monsieur Durieu had the habit of adding his mother's patronymic Muriel to his name, that he was referred to as Henri Auguste Durieu Muriel in his death certificate and that Henri Auguste Durieu and Henri Auguste Durieu Muriel are indeed one and the same."

39. A vaudeville folly in one act by Monsieur Auguste Muriel with new songs by Monsieur Olivier Métra..., Paris, Beaumarchais, 14 October 1854.
 40. Paris, Michel Lévy frères, 1855.
 41. 1854-1859 and 1860-1865.
 42. Firmin MAILLARD, *Histoire anecdotique et critique des 159 journaux parus en l'an de grâce 1856*, Paris, Repository, passage Jouffroy 7, 1857.
 43. AN, Minutier central, XCIII/669.
 44. AN, Minutier central, XCIII/685.
 45. *L'Europe artiste*, Paris, April 1864.
 46. I have not yet undertaken any research to discover why Eugène Durieu moved to Switzerland. The affidavit following his death indicates that the death "occurred at home". AN, Minutier central, XCIII/761. Luce Estelle Muriel, for her part, died at home in Choisy-le-Roi on 1 September 1874. AN, Minutier central, XCIII/763.
-

ABSTRACTS

Eugène Durieu (1800–1874) is an important figure of the early days of photography in France. His role in the genesis of the Mission héliographique is well established. He was a founding member of the Société héliographique and served as the first president of the Société française de photographie. His collaboration with the painter Eugène Delacroix in 1854 is now well known. His photographs are preserved in public and private collections in France and the United States. Nevertheless, little continues to be known about important aspects of his life. As a jurist, writer, and senior civil servant, he practiced several professions that had no direct connection with photography. He was the father of photographer Auguste Muriel (1829–1877). His reputation was ruined by a trial in the late 1850s, entailing a *damnatio memoriae* that does nothing to simplify research into his life. This article assesses the current state of our knowledge of this figure and what he reveals about the links between photography, the senior civil service, and the fine arts.

AUTHORS

SYLVIE AUBENAS

Sylvie Aubenas, General Curator and Director of the Prints and Photography Department of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, is a specialist in nineteenth-century photography. Over the last twenty years, she has published a number of works and articles and curated several exhibitions, including *Primitifs de la photographie, le calotype en France 1843-1860* (2010), organized in conjunction with Paul-Louis Roubert.